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FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

TO THE PRESIDENT

TELEGRAM NUMBER MISC 045

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T22/84

TOP SECRET

cc MASTER
OPS

DEAR RON,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE RECEIVED THIS MORNING ABOUT THE SITUATION IN THE LEBANON.

WE SHALL GIVE THOUGHT TO ALL THE POINTS IN IT. BUT IN VIEW OF THE URGENT AND DETERIORATING SITUATION IN BEIRUT LET ME GIVE YOU MY IMMEDIATE REACTION IN THE LIGHT OF YOUR DECISION TO BEGIN A PHASED RE-DEPLOYMENT OF THE U.S. MARINES ON SHORE AT BEIRUT AIRPORT BACK TO THEIR SHIPS OFFSHORE.

THE LATEST ADVICE FROM OUR PEOPLE ON THE SPOT (AND WE SHALL BE IN TOUCH WITH THEM AGAIN AT ONCE) IS THAT IT IS NOW VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR OUR CONTINGENT TO PLAY A USEFUL ROLE AND THAT THERE IS A GREATLY INCREASED RISK OF THEIR INCURRING CASUALTIES (YOU WILL OF COURSE BE AWARE OF THE PARTICULARLY EXPOSED POSITION OF OUR TROOPS). WE HAVE THEREFORE DECIDED THAT WE SHALL SIMILARLY RE-DEPLOY OUR OWN CONTINGENT. YOU WILL APPRECIATE THAT, SINCE WE HAVE LESS THAN 100 MEN THERE, THE QUESTION OF PHASING HARDLY ARISES. WE ARE STILL WORKING ON THE DETAILS BUT THE LIKELIHOOD IS THAT THE BULK OF, IF NOT ALL OUR CONTINGENT WILL BE REDEPLOYED SHORTLY.

I NOTE THAT A CONTINGENT OF U.S. MARINES WILL MAINTAIN DEFENSIVE POSITIONS NEAR THE BRITISH CHANCERY. WE SHALL CONSIDER URGENTLY WHETHER ANY OF OUR CONTINGENT CAN HAVE A USEFUL ROLE IN GUARDING OUR EMBASSY.

WE ALSO HAVE TO CONSIDER WHEN WE SHOULD ANNOUNCE THE REDEPLOYMENT. THIS WILL DEPEND PARTLY ON THE LIKELY EFFECT OF AN ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE SAFETY OF THE MNF, PARTLY ON PUBLIC OPINION HERE. WE SHALL ALSO NEED TO KNOW HOW SOON YOU PLAN TO MAKE YOUR OWN MOVES PUBLIC AND OUR EMBASSY WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH YOUR PEOPLE URGENTLY TODAY TO ESTABLISH THIS.

WE SHALL ALSO BE IN TOUCH URGENTLY WITH OUR FRENCH AND ITALIAN PARTNERS.

I SHALL DO MY BEST TO PRESENT OUR DECISION AS BEING IN LINE WITH AND SUPPORTIVE OF YOURS - AND TO RESIST THE ATTEMPTS OF THOSE WHO WILL TRY TO DRIVE WEDGES BETWEEN US.

I LOOK FORWARD TO BEING IN TOUCH SEPARATELY ABOUT THE LONGER-TERM ISSUES DEALT WITH IN YOUR MESSAGE - AND WILL HOPE TO DISCUSS THEM WITH GEORGE BUSH AT THE WEEKEND.

MY BEST WISHES AT THIS DIFFICULT TIME.

YOURS EVER,

MARGARET.

NNNN